



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Everything in Moderation

Binge Drinking Prevalence, Frequency, and Intensity Among Adults — United States, 2010

Recorded: January 17, 2012; posted: January 19, 2012

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Drinking too much alcohol has become a major national health problem. One in six U.S. adults participates in binge drinking, and about 80,000 people die each year from complications related to drinking too much.

Dr. Dafna Kanny is a senior scientist with CDC's Alcohol Program in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the dangers of over-indulging in alcohol. Welcome to the show, Dafna.

[Dr. Kanny] Hi.

[Dr. Gaynes] Dafna, what exactly is binge drinking?

[Dr. Kanny] Binge drinking is a dangerous behavior that is defined as four or more alcoholic drinks for women or five or more drinks for men during a short period of time

[Dr. Gaynes] What is an acceptable level of alcohol consumption?

[Dr. Kanny] Alcohol should be consumed in moderation. We define it as consumption of up to one drink per day for a woman or up to two drinks a day for a man. There are certain groups of people who should not drink alcohol at all, including women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, those who are under 21, or people operating motor vehicles.

[Dr. Gaynes] Why do people binge drink?

[Dr. Kanny] Most people don't think of binge drinking as a health and social problem. Binge drinking has not been widely recognized as a health risk. Binge drinking is associated with the social and physical environment where drinking decisions are made and is influenced by the price, availability, and marketing of alcohol in communities and states. I want to mention that most binge drinkers are not alcohol-dependent.

[Dr. Gaynes] What health problems can be caused by binge drinking?

[Dr. Kanny] There are short- and long-term effects of binge drinking, such as motor vehicle crashes, risky sexual behaviors, and interpersonal violence. Over time, binge drinking increases the risk of other serious health problems, including cancers, heart disease, and liver failure.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what should people do if they or someone they know have a problem with binge drinking?

[Dr. Kanny] If someone you know is a binge drinker, advise them not to do it. Advise them that the risks of binge drinking are really high, both in the short- and long-term. Also, advise them to talk to their health care provider. People can also support community efforts to curb the problem.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about overcoming binge drinking?

[Dr. Kanny] You can find more information on excessive alcohol use and binge drinking at the CDC's Alcohol Program website at www.cdc.gov/alcohol.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Dafna. I've been talking today with Dr. Dafna Kanny of CDC's Alcohol Program about the dangers of binge drinking.

Remember, binge drinking is a costly and deadly behavior. As in many areas of life, moderation is best – for women, that means no more than one drink a day and two for men.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.